

100 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT ARAB AMERICANS: COVERAGE

Like all people, Arab Americans are too often described in simplistic terms. Although the Arab culture is one of the oldest on Earth, it is, in many parts of the United States, misunderstood. There are no easy, one-size-fits-all answers. Culture, language and religion are distinct qualities that act in different ways to connect Arabs, and to distinguish them from one another. The differences that seem to separate Arab Americans from non-Arabs can be much smaller than the variations that at times differentiate them from one another. It takes time to learn the issues and to understand them, but it is essential and rewarding for us to do that. Misunderstanding ultimately hurts each one of us.

At the Detroit Free Press, published in the city with the United States' most concentrated Arab-American population, we try to better understand and explain these issues daily. After consulting with others, we offer this guide as a step toward more accurate journalistic portrayals of Arab Americans.

The 100 questions and answers contained herein only touch on the issues. We urge you to give these issues the attention they deserve by continuing to read, to interview sources on all sides and to make a long-term commitment to increasing your understanding. For it is only with understanding that we can practice fair and accurate journalism.

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1. Who are Arab Americans?

Arab Americans are U.S. citizens and permanent residents who trace their ancestry to or who immigrated from Arabic-speaking places in southwestern Asia and northern Africa, a region known as the Middle East. Not all people in this region are Arabs. Most Arab Americans were born in the United States.

2. How many Arab Americans are there?

This is the subject of some debate. Estimates vary because the U.S. Census Bureau does not use an Arab American classification and because people identify themselves in various ways. Some Arab Americans identify themselves as Middle Eastern, for example. Recent immigrants from many countries are reluctant to give personal and confidential information to the government, and an increasing number of people have more than one ethnicity. Estimates of Arab Americans living in the United States are about 3 million.

3. Where do Arab Americans live?

Arab Americans live in all 50 states, but about a third are concentrated in California, Michigan and New York. Another third are in these seven states: Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas and Virginia.

4. What are the population centers for Arab Americans?

About half of Arab Americans live in 20 metropolitan areas. The top four are Los Angeles County in California; Wayne and Oakland counties in Michigan; Brooklyn, N.Y., and Cook County, Ill.

5. Do Arabs have a shared language?

The Arabic language is one of the great unifying and distinguishing characteristics of Arab people. Even so, colloquial Arabic differs from place to place. There are several categories: Levantine dialect (Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon), Egyptian and North African dialect, and Khalijji, or Gulf, dialect. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is a pan-Arabic language used in formal letters, books and newspapers. It is also spoken at Middle East peace conferences and on television news. Quaranic Arabic, like MSA, also is a widely spoken form of the language, but it differs in style and lexicon from MSA. Not all Arab Americans know Arabic, of course, as many are second-, third- and fourth-generation Americans.

6. Do Arabs have a shared religion?

No. Arabs belong to many religions, including Islam, Christianity, Druze, Judaism and others. There are further distinctions within each of these, and some religious groups have evolved new identities and faith practices in the United States. Be careful to distinguish religion from culture. Although Arabs are connected by culture, they have different faiths. Common misperceptions are to think that Arab traditions are Islamic, or that Islam unifies all Arabs. Most Arab Americans are Catholic or Orthodox Christians, but this is not true in all parts of the United States. In some areas most Arab Americans are Muslim.

7. What is the Middle East conflict all about?

This handbook cannot adequately answer that question. The largest conflict in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict and the struggle over Palestine. In addition to conflicts between Arab countries and Israel, there is disagreement between and

within Arab countries. The roots of these conflicts are in some of the world's oldest religions, ethnic differences and boundaries drawn during 20th Century colonialism. For more detailed answers, read some of the books listed in the back of this guide.

8. How does conflict in the Middle East affect Arab Americans?

Because Arabs maintain close family ties, even when separated, and because many Arab-American communities include recent immigrants, most people have a keen interest in news from the Middle East. Remember, too, that one reason many Arab American families immigrated was to escape the very conflicts that continue today. Mideast issues can unify the Arab vote in America. News coverage, including wire stories and headlines, must be balanced, accurate, detailed and fair. Reporters and editors must work to understand the issues.

9. To which places do Arab Americans trace their ancestry?

Arab Americans trace their roots to many places, including parts or all of Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Some Arabs are Israeli citizens.

10. Is Palestine a country?

Historically, Palestine was a country east of the Mediterranean Sea that includes Israel and parts of Jordan. As a distinct region, Palestine was under Ottoman control (a Turkish empire) and then British control until 1948, when the nation of Israel was created. Areas of Palestine became Israel and part of Jordan. Today, Palestinians share a collective national identity and are moving back toward independence and self-rule as a country. The Palestinian National Council, acts as the government.

11. Shouldn't Iran be in that list?

No. Iran is not an Arab country. Although Iran borders Iraq, it is descended from the Persian empire and has a different language and cultural history than the Arab countries. The dominant language in Iran is Farsi, not Arabic, although other languages are spoken there as well. Persian is sometimes used to describe either the language or the ethnicity, but Farsi and Iranian are not interchangeable. Iran's location, the fact that it is an Islamic country and the similarity of its name to Iraq may confuse people.

12. So, not all people from the Middle East are Arabs?

That is correct. The four main language groups in the Middle East are Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish. Other significant language groups are Kurdish and Berber. Arabs are largest in terms of population and land holdings, and this handbook focuses on people who have emigrated from or who are descended from people in those areas.

13. Are there other groups from the Arab region?

Yes. Assyrians, Berbers, Chaldeans and Kurds have languages rooted in pre-Arabic times. There also are religious differences. The Chaldeans are the largest of these groups in the United States.

14. Who are Chaldeans?

Chaldeans are Catholics from Iraq. A religious and ethnic minority there, Chaldeans have some large communities in the United States, the largest in Detroit. The Chaldean Catholic Church has had connections with the Roman Catholic Church since 1551, and has been affiliated since 1830. The Chaldean Diocese of the Catholic

Church in the United States has parishes in Michigan, California, Chicago and Arizona. It also has several missions. Churches offer Chaldean language services. Chaldeans and Assyrians, along with Arabs, are Semite people. The cultural foundation is similar, but the religious affiliation is different.

15. So, are Chaldeans Arabs, or not?

Chaldeans and Arabs share some issues, but they have different identities. The Chaldean language is different from Arabic and, in Iraq, Chaldeans are religiously distinct from the Muslim majority. While Chaldeans foster a separate identity, they also have an Iraqi nationality and some shared concerns with Arabs. These nuances are lost by federal classifications, which sometimes reclassify Chaldeans as Arab or Iraqi. It is best to ask people how they would like to be identified, to be specific and, when relevant, to explain.

16. Is Arabic the only language spoken within the Arab world?

No. For example, Assyrian and Chaldean services use a dialect of the original Aramaic. Berber and Kurdish are other non-Arabic languages of the Middle East.

17. So, do all Arab Americans speak one of these languages?

No. Remember that many Arab-American families have been in the United States for generations. Do not assume that an Arab American should know Arabic, any more than any other American should speak the language of his or her ethnic group.

18. Many recently immigrated Arab Americans also know French. Why is that?

Part of the recent history of Arab people is colonization by the French and British. In colonized countries, people in business and government had to know one or more European languages.

19. Do Arab schools teach other languages?

Definitely. It is much more common for Arab Americans to speak more than one language than it is for non-Arab Americans. Many countries place more emphasis on language than the United States does. Many immigrants come to the United States having learned two or three languages in their country of origin. Arab countries emphasize the importance of knowing a foreign language, and they are very familiar with Western media.

20. Is there any advice on pronouncing Arabic names?

Not really. It can be quite difficult to transliterate Arabic words into English, a language that uses different sounds and fewer letters. Unless you know the Arabic alphabet, it's hard to know how to pronounce words correctly. The "r" sound is rolled, and there are characters for three different pronunciations of the "th" sound. If you are unsure, respectfully ask a source to explain. Write down the pronunciation and the spelling, so you can give readers both. Be aware that, for these reasons, spellings vary.

21. Is there any trick to spelling Arabic words?

There are so many variations that it is crucial to ask, as you would with any word. Because Arabic and English characters and sounds are different, there is more than one way to transliterate the words. The Associated Press, for example, recently changed its style for the spelling of Mohammed to Muhammad, and it has changed its style for Koran to Quran.

22. How is Arabic written?

Arabic is one of several languages written from right to left. It would be narrow-minded to think of this as backwards writing. Think how you might feel if someone thought that you were reading this sentence backwards.

23. Are characters in Arabic different than those we use to write English?

Yes. English is written in Latin characters. Arabic is written in the 28-character Arabic alphabet. In Arabic, a character may change depending on its placement in the word or sentence. Arabic letters are connected like script. Fine writing is called calligraphy and is held in high regard and appreciated as an art form in the Arabic culture.

24. When did Arab people come to the United States?

Today, most Arab Americans are native-born Americans. The first significant wave of immigration began around 1875. It lasted until about 1920. After a period in which the United States restricted immigration, a second wave began in the 1940s.

25. Why did Arabs first come to the United States?

Like many peoples who came to the United States, Arabs were seeking opportunity. Factors in the first immigration were Japanese competition that hurt the Lebanese silk market and a disease that hurt Lebanese vineyards. Most early Arab immigrants were from Lebanon and Syria, and most were Christian.

26. What prompted the second wave?

After 1940, immigration to the United States was not for economic reasons as much as because of the Arab-Israeli conflict and civil war. This meant that people came from many more places. The second immigration also had many more people who practiced Islam, a religion that was not as familiar in the United States. Immigrants in this group tended to be more financially secure when they arrived than people who had come earlier for economic opportunity. Many people in the second wave were students.

27. What race are Arab Americans?

Arabs may have white skin and blue eyes, olive or dark skin and brown eyes. Hair textures differ. The United States has, at different times, classified Arab immigrants as African, Asian, white, European or as belonging to a separate group. Most Arab Americans identify more closely with nationality than with ethnic group.

28. Are Arabs a minority group?

This depends, in part, on your definition of minority. The U.S. government does not classify Arabs as a minority group for purposes of employment and housing. Arabs are not defined specifically by race, like some minority groups, but are united by culture and language. Some Arab Americans see minority classification as an impediment to full participation in American life. Others are asking for protection from the same issues affecting people in minority groups, such as profiling, stereotyping and exclusion.

29. Are Arab Americans more closely tied to their country of origin, or to America?

This need not be an either-or issue. Arab Americans have dual loyalties. While they may be closely tied to their countries of origin, most Arab Americans were born in the United States, and an even larger majority have U.S. citizenship. This is reflected in the expression, "Truly Arab and fully American."

30. Who are some well-known Arab Americans?

Christa McAuliffe, the teacher/astronaut who died aboard the space shuttle Challenger; Indy 500 winner Bobby Rahal; Heisman Trophy winner and NFL quarterback Doug Flutie; creators of radio's American Top 40 Casey Kasem and Don Bustany; Mothers Against Drunk Driving founder Candy Lightner; Jacques Nasser, president and chief executive officer of Ford Motor Co., and Helen Thomas, dean of the White House press corps.

31. Does the U.S. Census Bureau collect data on Arab Americans?

While the census does not specifically classify Arab Americans, it does collect enough data to present some population characteristics. Some of that information is on the U.S. Census Bureau's Web site at www.census.gov, and is reflected in this guide.

32. What is the educational level of Arab Americans?

Arab Americans are, on average, better educated than non-Arab Americans. The proportion of Arab Americans who attend college is higher than the national average. Compared to the norm, about twice as many Arab Americans, in percentage terms, earn degrees beyond the bachelor's degree. Key factors in this question are country of origin, length of time in the United States and gender.

33. What occupations do Arab Americans pursue?

Arab Americans work in all occupations. Collectively, they are more likely to be self-employed or to be entrepreneurs or to work in sales. About 60 percent of working Arab Americans are executives, professionals, office and sales staff. At the local level, Arab Americans are most likely to be executives in Washington, D.C., and Anaheim, Calif.; sales people in Cleveland and Anaheim, and manufacturing workers in Detroit. As with all people, employment choices may be influenced by nationality, religion, education, socio-economic status and gender.

34. How do Arab Americans fare economically?

Individually, Arab Americans are at every economic strata of American life. Nationally, Arab-American households have a higher than average median income. Like occupational patterns, this varies by location. Arab-American earnings are below the overall average income in Detroit and Anaheim.

35. What is the role of the family in Arab culture?

The variety of family types among Arab Americans is vast, and influenced by the same factors mentioned in the answer to Question 33. Generally, family is more important than the individual and more influential than nationality. People draw much of their identity from their role in the family. Historically, this has fostered immigration in which members of an extended family or clan help one another immigrate.

36. Do Arab Americans maintain ties with their home countries?

Many do. They are very proud of their home countries and may maintain regular contact with relatives or friends there, as many Americans do. Arab Americans will sometimes joke with one another over which of their home countries is the best, but it is perfectly consistent to have loyalties both to their place of origin and their country of citizenship.

37. What are gender roles like for Arab Americans?

These vary tremendously. Some of the variables are country of origin, whether the family came from a rural or urban area and how long the person's family has been in

the United States. It is more accurate to ask the subject of the story about his or her own experience than to apply a stereotype.

38. Do Arab Americans have large families?

Arab-American families are, on average, larger than non-Arab-American families and smaller than families in Arab countries. Traditionally, more children meant more pride and economic contributors for the family. The cost of having large families in the United States, however, and adaptation to American customs seem to encourage smaller families.

39. What kind of relationship does cousin mean to Arab Americans?

The same as for other Americans, though Arabs may differentiate between maternal and paternal cousins when they refer to them.

40. Do generations of Arab Americans live together?

Sometimes, especially with people who have more recently arrived in the United States, but this can be true of non-Arabs as well and is not a distinguishing characteristic of Arab Americans.

41. Do Arab Americans typically get married at a younger age than non-Arabs?

Yes, though this is changing. As women follow careers, they are not expected to marry so young. Arab women might also marry older men who can provide greater financial security.

42. Are marriages arranged?

This is very rare, except among the most recent immigrants. Remember that most Arab Americans were born here, and that they frequently marry people from other cultures. In the case where a marriage is arranged, a parent may recommend someone from another family or from the country of origin, but the child is not forced to marry that person. More typically, couples meet and ask their families' approval before getting engaged, or make their own decision and then tell their families.

43. Do Arab Americans prefer to marry each other?

As with many people, in-group marriage may be encouraged as a way to preserve heritage, but Arabs and non-Arabs frequently marry one other. Religious differences among Arab Americans, in fact, may make it more desirable to marry a non-Arab of similar religious background than an Arab of a different religion.

44. Are there any Arab conventions for naming children?

Muslims often name their children after prophets in the Quran. Shi'ite Muslims sometimes use Ali as a middle name. Christians often name their children after people in the Bible. Although names can give an indication of a person's religion, don't assume. Arab tradition may call for the father's name to be the middle name of sons and daughters.

45. What does the title Umm or Abu mean as part of a name?

It is a common way of calling someone using their oldest son's name. Umm means mother of. Abu means father of. "Umm Muhammad" is "mother of Muhammad." This is what friends might call her, as a sign of respect.

46. What do Arabs mean when they refer to someone as Auntie?

It is a sign of respect, not necessarily family relationship. An Arab American might call any older Arab male or female "auntie" or "uncle." Many Arab Americans do not use these terms at all. Journalists can show respect by using courtesy titles.

47. Why do some Arab women wear garments that cover their faces or heads?

This is a religious practice, not a cultural practice. It is rooted in Islamic teachings about hijab, or modesty. While some say that veiling denigrates women, some women say that it liberates them. Covering is not universally observed by Muslim women and varies by region and class. Some Arab governments have, at times, banned or required veiling. In American families, a mother or daughter may cover her head while the other does not.

48. What garments might a woman wear to practice hijab?

One interpretation is that everything should be covered except hands, face and feet. Long clothing and a scarf would accomplish this and the head scarf might be called a hijab or chador. The long, robe-like garment is called an abayah, jilbab, or chador. In Iraq and Saudi Arabia especially, a woman may wear a cloak that covers her head. Beneath a robe, a woman may be wearing a traditional dress, casual clothes or a business suit. The veil, in particular, has been made controversial by governments, gender politics and religious biases. Most Muslim women in the United States do not wear veils.

49. Some Arab men wear a checked garment on their heads. What is that?

It is called a kafiyyeh and it is traditional, not religious. Wearing the kafiyyeh is similar to an African American wearing traditional African attire, or an Indian wearing a sari. The kafiyyeh shows identity and pride in one's culture.

50. Why do some Arab women dress in black?

Remember that black is a popular color in contemporary American fashion and may not have any special significance. When it does, it may be a sign of mourning. Black, when worn in mourning, may be worn for a few days to many years.

51. What is an appropriate way to greet an Arab American?

This is not difficult or tricky. Remember that most Arab Americans grew up here and do not require special greetings. Be yourself, and let them be themselves. If they are practicing Muslims or recent immigrants, watch for cues. A smile, a nod and a word of greeting are appropriate in most situations. Some Muslims feel it is inappropriate for unrelated men and women to shake hands. Wait until the other person extends his or her hand before you extend your own.

52. What are the customs for paying compliments?

Again, be yourself and be observant. In most cases, there is no reason to behave differently than you would with anyone else. For some recent immigrants, be a little more reserved. Complimenting a possession may be misunderstood and the person, out of generosity and hospitality, may feel compelled to offer you the object. There can be a lot of difference between one person and another, even a parent and child, so don't assume one way is always best.

53. What about gift-giving?

The giving of token gifts is a polite practice in many cultures and American businesses. A gift, then, can put journalistic integrity and cultural sensitivity into conflict. You will have to balance your journalistic ethics against the risk of offending someone by refusing a gift. Consider your ethics policy, the giver's intention, the effects of acceptance or denial, as well as the value of the gift. You may need to consult with your supervisor or explain yourself to the giver.

54. What is Middle-Eastern food like?

Tasty! It is varied, but has some staples. Wheat is used in bread, pastries, salads and main dishes. Rice is often cooked with vegetables, lamb, chicken or beef. Lamb and mutton are more common than other meats. Arab recipes use many beans and vegetables, including eggplant, zucchini, cauliflower, spinach, onions, parsley and chickpeas.

55. What is that pipe I sometimes see people smoking?

It is a water pipe that filters and cools tobacco smoke, which often is flavored with apple, honey, strawberry, mint, mango or apricot. Such pipes are used in several parts of the world and are not an exclusively Arab apparatus. They are known by several names, including sheesha, hookah and argilah, or argeelah.

56. Do most Arab Americans belong to the same religion?

Most Arab Americans are Christian, though this varies by region. In many communities, Muslim and Christian Arabs live side by side with each other and with non-Arab religious communities. Most Arab countries are predominantly Muslim.

57. Is Islam mostly an Arab religion, then?

No. Only about 12 percent of Muslims worldwide are Arabs. There are more Muslims in Indonesia, for example, than in all Arab countries combined. Large populations of Muslims also live in India, Iran, other parts of East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Islam has a strong Arab flavor, though, as the religion's holiest places are in the Middle East, and the Quran was originally written in Arabic.

58. What is the Quran?

The Quran is the holy book for Muslims, who believe it contains the word of God revealed to the prophet Muhammad. The Quran has many passages that are similar to those in the Bible, which Muslims also regard as a holy book. The Quran has been translated into many languages, including English, and is available on the Web. Quran is Associated Press style. Other spellings are Qur'an and Koran. Variations come from transliterating Arabic into English.

59. What is the difference between Islam and Muslim?

Islam is the religion, and a Muslim is a follower of the religion. It is like the difference between Christianity and Christian. The adjective form is Islamic.

60. What are the five pillars of Islam?

The five pillars are minimum sacred obligations for followers who are able to observe them. They are: belief in the shehada, the statement that "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet"; salat, or prayer five times a day; zakat, the sharing of alms with the poor; fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

61. What is Ramadan?

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, is a month of fasting whose end is marked with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. During this month of self-discipline and purification, Muslims abstain from food, drink and sex from before sunrise until sundown. At night, however, they may feast. The Islamic calendar is based on the cycles of the moon and has 354 days, so Ramadan does not always occur at the same time of year according to the 365-day civil calendar.

62. What is the proper greeting during Ramadan?

You may say, "Ramadan Mubarrak." You could also say, "Salaam," which means "peace" and is useful at any time. If you are planning to meet with Muslims during Ramadan, be aware that they may be fasting and a meal-time meeting may be awkward.

63. Must Arabs make a journey to Mecca?

This relates to Muslims, not all Arabs. Learn to keep that distinction in mind. Muslims who are financially and physically able to do so are expected to make the journey at least once in their lifetime.

64. What does hajj mean?

Al hajj refers to the pilgrimage to Mecca by millions of Muslims once each year. It is a milestone event in a Muslim's life. A man who makes the trip is recognized with the title hajji, which means pilgrim. For women, the title is hajjah.

65. What is the difference between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims?

Historically, these are the two main branches of Islam, and their distinction has to do with the successor of the prophet Muhammad. Sunnis believe his successors were elected religious leaders; Shi'a believe that the prophet appointed Ali ibn Abi Taleb. The answer is much more complicated than this, though, because there are other differences and new ones have arisen over the years. There also are separate groups and movements within each branch. In the United States, Muslim unity often overshadows the divisions. Most Muslims worldwide and in the United States are Sunni, though Shi'as dominate in some communities. Most Muslims in Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon and the non-Arab country of Iran are Shi'a.

66. Are there restrictions on entering a mosque?

One generally must enter without shoes. Look for a sign from your host, or for a place to leave your shoes. Women should dress modestly and may be asked to cover their heads. Men should wear long pants and shirts. Men and women generally pray in different areas.

67. Is it OK to take pictures there?

Each mosque has its own rules. Ask in advance and do not assume it will be OK to photograph at will. Be prepared to make some accommodations if certain angles or parts of the mosque are off limits.

68. Who is an imam?

The leader of prayer at a mosque. He might also be called a sheik. One of an imam's responsibilities is to give sermons on Friday, the holiest day of the typical Islamic week. In many American mosques, the imam is also the administrator. To journalists, an imam can be an important community leader and a good source of information about local Muslims.

69. What are important Islamic holidays?

The most important Muslim observance each year is Ramadan. Muslims also celebrate Eid al-Adha on the last day of the hajj -- the pilgrimage to Mecca -- and Eid al-Fitr, at the end of Ramadan. Depending on the makeup of your area, these are worthy of consideration as news events. There are other holidays, as well, but do not assume that a holiday or practice observed at one mosque is observed by all.

70. Where is the headquarters for Islam?

Islam does not have the same kind of hierarchy as some other religions. There is no top official or ruling board for Islam. Muslim mosques, or masjids, and associations are independent. Muslims are not required to be members of a mosque.

71. Why do some Arab men decline to shake hands with women?

Some Muslim men, for religious reasons, avoid physical contact with women other than close relatives. This is not true for all Muslims and exceptions are made to help women who are injured, crossing the street, etc.

72. Is the Nation of Islam related to Islam?

This African American religious group is closely related to Islam, but evolved in the 20th Century with some different practices than those followed by most Muslims. Most African-American Muslims in the United States are not part of the Nation of Islam.

73. What is Eastern rite or Eastern Orthodox?

Be careful. These are designations for Christian churches that share some similarities, but that have different histories. Eastern rite churches are part of the Catholic church with roots in the Middle East and include Maronites, Melkites and Chaldeans. Eastern Orthodox churches, which are independent from Vatican authority, include the Syrian and Coptic churches.

74. Who are Coptics?

The word Copt is derived from the Greek word for Egyptian and Coptic was the native language of Egypt before Arabic prevailed. Today, the word refers to Coptic Christians. Although linguistically and culturally classified as Arabs, many consider themselves to be ethnically distinct from other Egyptians.

75. What does Allah mean?

Allah means God. The same word is used by Arabic-speaking Christians, Muslims and Jews. When translating Arabic expressions, translate all the words, for consistency. The translation of "Allahu Akbar," for example, would be "God is great," not "Allah is great."

76. Why do Muslims face east when they pray?

They are facing Kaaba (the House of God) at Mecca, the holiest of the three cities of Islam. Muslims in other countries face different directions, depending on where they are in relation to Mecca.

77. What are the other two holy cities?

Medina in Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem.

78. Are Arab Americans active in U.S. politics?

Yes. For decades, Arab Americans have voted, run for office and been elected. According to John L. Zogby, a pollster who is Arab American, 86 percent of voting-age Arab Americans in early 2000 were registered voters. In 1996, exit polls said 54 percent of the Arab-American vote was for Bill Clinton, 38 percent went for Bob Dole and 7.7 percent went for independent candidate H. Ross Perot. The 2000 campaign was the first in which both major presidential candidates addressed Arab Americans.

79. Have Arab Americans won major political offices?

Yes. In 1998, for example, 12 Arab Americans campaigned for the U.S. Congress in 10 states.

80. Who are some prominent Arab-American politicians?

They have included U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine; Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham; former secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala; New Hampshire Gov. Jeanne Shaheen; former New Hampshire governor and White House chief of staff John Sununu, and 2000 presidential candidate Ralph Nader.

81. Is there an Arab lobby?

There is not an Arab lobby in the sense of a monolithic, controlling body. There are several organizations that lobby in behalf of a variety of issues, including domestic and international concerns. One is the Arab American Institute, which supports presidential and congressional candidates who are receptive to Arab-American concerns. Another is the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, a civil rights group.

82. Should I say Arab, Arabic or Arabian?

Arab is a noun for a person, and is used as an adjective, as in "Arab country." Arabic is the name of the language and generally is not used as an adjective. Arabian is an adjective that refers to Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Peninsula, or as in Arabian horse. When ethnicity or nationality are relevant, it is more precise and accurate to specify the country by using Lebanese, Yemeni or whatever is appropriate. We suggest that you hyphenate when using Arab-American as an adjective, as in Arab-American issues, but do not hyphenate when saying that someone is an Arab American.

83. Is Arab American, or American Arab preferred?

Arab American but, again, if you can be more specific, do so.

84. How should I refer to an Arab-American individual?

Preferably by the country that person is from, for example, "of Lebanese heritage," or "of Jordanian descent," but only if ethnicity is relevant. Remember that Arab Americans come from many places, and you should include the relevant perspective. If the story is about an issue that affects Yemenis, for example, don't treat other Arabic perspectives as interchangeable.

85. What if the story is about Arab Americans whose ethnicity is not relevant to the story?

Then there is no need to identify their ethnicity. It is important to include Arab Americans even when the story is about issues unrelated to heritage or culture. Arab Americans are teachers, lawyers, grocers, executives and students. Their views are important to many stories. If journalists confine Arab Americans to stories about Arab issues, other facets of their experience are ignored and the overall portrayal is one-dimensional.

86. What does Mohammedanism mean?

Do not use Mohammedan and its derivatives. Instead, use Islam for the religion, Muslim for a follower of the religion and derivatives of these words.

87. Is it Muslim or Moslem?

Muslim.

88. Who is a sheik?

A sheik can be the leader of a family, a village, a tribe or a mosque. Press accounts popularized the term "oil-rich sheik." This contributed to the misconception that the

people who became wealthy from oil were sheiks, and that sheiks had oil money. Neither is true.

89. Are Arabs oil-rich?

Some are, most aren't. The area around the Persian Gulf is one of several oil-producing areas in the world, but not all Arab countries produce oil, and very few Arabs are rich from oil.

90. Are Arabs mostly a nomadic people?

No. Most live in urban areas, but portrayals of Arabs as desert dwellers have distorted the picture. Bedouins, nomadic people depicted in movies, make up only about 2 percent of Arab people. One of the largest Arab cities is Cairo, with a population of more than 6 million.

91. Do Arabs come from the desert?

Most do not. To begin with, most Arabs live in cities. Secondly, Arab countries have a range of climates. Many have coastal areas and some have mountainous areas that get snow. Arab people come from a variety of latitudes that extend from as far south as just below the equator to as far north as approximately Lexington, Ky.

92. Are Arabs frequently involved in terrorism?

No more so than other groups of people. Many types of people have committed acts of terror. However, news accounts seem to more often stress Arab connections than they do for terrorism committed by other groups. In addition, there have been highly publicized cases when Arabs were singled out, early on and erroneously, as suspects. The Oklahoma City federal building bombing in 1995 was one such case.

93. What is meant by the phrase "Islamic fundamentalist"?

This is complex. The term fundamentalist, whether applied to Muslims or Christians, is a largely American construct that has been used to imply political conservatism and, sometimes, extremism. The term "Islamic fundamentalist" has been used to refer to people who use Islam to justify political actions. This has blurred the distinction between religion and politics. Because of this, acts carried out for political reasons are sometimes attributed to religion. Fairness and accuracy mean attributing political actions to the group, government or party responsible, and not to a religion, which may have millions of followers around the world. Avoid constructions like "Muslim bomb."

94. Is Islam a violent religion?

The Quran teaches nonviolence. Throughout history, political groups and leaders have used Islam and other religions to justify many things, including violence

95. Are Arab-American women subservient to men?

No sweeping statement can reflect all the roles of Arab women. They range from leaders of matriarchal societies to independent businesswomen to extreme deference. Their roles are affected by their country of origin, whether they are from urban or rural areas, religion, degree of assimilation and, of course, their own, individual characteristics.

96. What is that charm with the eye or an eye on a hand?

Often worn as jewelry, the hamsa is a non-religious symbol for protection or good luck. The eye, usually blue when colored, wards off the evil eye or evil spirits. For

example, the charm may be put on a baby to protect the child from harm. This cultural tradition is shared by many people of different religions.

97. How can I find Arab Americans in my community?

In cities where there are large populations, this is easy. You can find restaurants, stores, markets and other businesses with Arabic names or writing on them. Look for organizations, community centers, churches and mosques that might be Arab-related. Use these as beginning points, and don't keep going back to the same people, or focus only on recent immigrants.

98. Are there issues about the way Arab Americans are portrayed in the media?

Yes. In some cases, journalists seem to prefer to publish or air images of people who look different, or exotic. In trying for a more interesting image, they may emphasize the difference between Arab Americans and non-Arab Americans. Most Arab Americans do not wear traditional clothing. News organizations whose collective reports give the impression that Arab Americans generally dress differently than non-Arab Americans are being inaccurate.

99. Is there a coverage pitfall that reporters should avoid?

Like many groups, Arab Americans say that reporters stay away unless there is a problem to report, or if there is a national or international crisis for which they want reaction. This keeps people out of sight except when they are associated with trouble. The solution is to cover Arab Americans consistently and continuously. By paying attention to what communities say are significant news issues, reporters offer deeper and fuller coverage.

100. How can I learn more?

We're glad you asked. This resource guide is just an introduction. Any one of the 100 questions in it has answers that would fill a book. We have listed some resources for further study in the following pages. We also encourage you to get out and talk to people, and to invite them to visit your newsroom.

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